

MEMORANDUM

DATE: April 30, 2008

TO: All Members of the Delaware State Senate
and House of Representatives

FROM: Ms. Daniese McMullin-Powell
Chairperson
State Council for Persons with Disabilities

RE: S.B. 174 (Bicycle & Scooter/Skateboard Legislation)

The State Council for Persons with Disabilities (SCPD) has reviewed S.B. 174 which essentially raises the age for wearing a helmet while riding a bicycle, motorized scooter, or motorized skateboard from the 16th birthday to the 18th birthday and updated the helmet certification standards in the Delaware Code. H.A. 1 to S.B. 174 adds self propelled skateboards and scooters to the helmet requirements, while providing an exemption for those who object to wearing helmets for personal religious convictions.

Consistent with the attached letters, the legislation has been endorsed by the Office of Highway Safety, the Department of Safety and Homeland Security, and the Division of Public Health. In addition, the proposed bill has been formally endorsed by the Brain Injury Association of Delaware; State Council for Persons with Disabilities; Developmental Disabilities Council; Disabilities Law Program; Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens; Easter Seals; Center for Disabilities Studies; The Arc of Delaware; and United Cerebral Palsy. We endorse the proposed legislation since it will decrease fatalities, decrease the incidence of disabilities and injuries, and decrease healthcare costs. This rationale is based on the following compelling statistics.

According the National Conference of State Legislatures website, bicycle helmets decrease the risk of head and brain injuries by 85 to 88 percent. Helmets also reduce the risk of injury to the middle and upper face by 67 percent.

The Bicycle Safety Institute reports the following:

1. Older bicyclists represent a larger percentage of bicycle deaths than in the past. Seventy-six percent of 2002 bicycle deaths were riders 16 years or older compared with 32 percent of deaths in 1975.
2. Helmets are cheap. The typical store price is \$15, but there are still models available under \$10.
3. Bicycle accidents crash-land more kids in hospital emergency rooms than any other sport.
4. Non-helmeted riders are 14 times more likely to be involved in a fatal crash than helmeted riders.

5. It is estimated that 75 percent of bicycle related fatalities among children could be prevented with a bicycle helmet.
6. 1 in 8 cyclists with reported injuries has a brain injury and two-thirds of the deaths here are from traumatic brain injury. Please note that bicycle crashes are under reported since many are not considered serious enough for emergency room visits.
7. There is a high fatality rate for bicyclists between the ages of 15 and 19

Traumatic brain injury (TBI) is the number one cause of death and disability in both children and adults. TBI is the largest acquired disabling condition of children and adolescents, with 15-24 year-olds at highest risk. In the United States, a TBI occurs every 21 seconds. Every five minutes one person will die and another will become permanently disabled due to brain injury. In 2004, 1,465 Delaware citizens sustained a TBI requiring hospitalization (Delaware Trauma System Registry). Ninety percent of TBI victims have difficulty with understanding, reasoning, learning, memory, and/or emotions. Sixty-one percent suffer from muscle weakness or uncontrollable movement, paralysis, or coordination problems. A TBI survivor's lifetime expenses for healthcare and services may reach approximately \$4 million.

Finally, the importance of requiring helmet use by 16-17 year old teens is statistically supported by the attached CDC chart illustrating that this is a very high-risk age group for TBI.

Thank you for your consideration and please contact SCPD if you have any questions regarding our position on the proposed legislation.

cc: The Honorable Ruth Ann Minner
Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens
Developmental Disabilities Council

Sb 174 helmets 5-08.doc